

I believe our Nation is safer, stronger and better. We are fighting and winning a war on terror on many fronts, including Iraq and Afghanistan; Afghanistan is free; Libya is disarmed; and Iraq is well on its way to becoming a free country in the heart of the Middle East. The spread of democracy in this part of the world will help ensure our safety here in the United States.

Recent economic data is a powerful confirmation that the President's pro-growth economic policies are working. Home ownership rates are up, and minority home ownership is at its highest level ever. Real GDP has grown at its fastest rate in almost 20 years over the last three quarters. Productivity has grown at its fastest 3-year rate in 40 years during the past 12 quarters.

Mr. Speaker, we have overcome the triple shock of terrorist attacks, corporate scandals and recession, and we are a stronger country on many fronts, thanks to the leadership of President George Bush.

SOARING GAS PRICES

(Mr. ROSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, after months of record-breaking gasoline prices, the pocketbooks of America's working families are hurting. Rising gas prices mean working families have less money to spend on important items, such as clothing and groceries, a factor that hurts our overall economy as well as individual families. Family vacations are being canceled.

Today, the average price of a gallon of gas in the United States is \$2.10, but in Iraq the cost of one gallon of gasoline is only 5 cents. It only costs \$1.10 to fill up a 22-gallon tank in Baghdad.

Americans deserve to know why their gas prices are soaring out of control, and, just as importantly, Americans need a solution. It is time to pass a real, meaningful, common sense, comprehensive energy policy and bring down the high cost of gasoline for America's working families.

RESTORING AND PROTECTING LOUISIANA WETLANDS

(Mr. TAUZIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, my State, Louisiana, is suffering the worst national ecological disaster in the history of this country. Every year we lose up to 35 square miles of the most precious wetlands in America. The comprehensive energy bill we passed yesterday on this House floor and sent to the other body contains money, for the first time, billions of dollars, to address that national economic disaster.

Louisiana contributes over \$5 billion a year from offshore development. We get less than 1 percent back. That bill

we sent to the other body contains billions to begin to restore and protect those vanishing wetlands, the biggest environmental program, bigger than the Chesapeake Bay, bigger than the Everglades.

I cannot speak about the other body and how they vote, but let me issue a warning: No one in this Congress who votes against that comprehensive energy bill and that environmental package, no one in this Congress better show their face in south Louisiana if they vote against that comprehensive energy bill.

MAKING AMERICA MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Louisiana's impassioned point, and I happen to agree that there are things we need to do with this devastating coastal erosion in Louisiana. But the way that we go about that and the way we deal with some of our significant energy problems is not simply ritually repassing an inadequate and failed energy policy that has already stalled in the other body.

It does not have to be this hard. We do not have to hold good ideas hostage. The wind energy production tax credit would pass in a heartbeat; energy grid reliability would be massively supported; increased fuel efficiency standards are long overdue; and, yes, maybe even some assistance for the coastal erosion.

Hopefully, after we get past this week's ritual repassage and the beating of our gums, I hope the House will return to enact simple, common sense proposals that will make America more energy efficient without compromising the environment, and make our families safer, healthier and more economically secure.

NEW MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL WORKS

(Mr. BONNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a simple observation based on large part from the results of two town meetings we had in my district last week, one in Fairhope and one in Mobile: The new Medicare prescription drug law that we passed and which has been enacted is working.

Since the changes to the Medicare program began to take effect on June 1, millions of Americans have taken advantage of the toll-free Medicare helpline as well as the Internet web site. In fact, during the first 4 days of May, 1.6 million men and women, nearly 10 times the normal call volume, called that helpline for further infor-

mation. During the same time period, 7 million people visited the Medicare web site.

After just 2 weeks of competition between the drug manufacturers of this country, prices on name brand drugs have dropped nearly 12 percent, and the cost for generics have dropped nearly 13 percent.

Some would have us believe that the new and improved Medicare program is not working, that it will be too costly and seniors will not take the time to show interest in this. The facts speak just the opposite.

FTC SHOULD INVESTIGATE INCREASE IN GASOLINE PRICES

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans are playing games here on the House floor this week. America's consumers should not be fooled into believing that the energy bills on the floor will do anything to lower gas prices in the immediate future.

Back in 2001, the FTC concluded that during the summer of 2000 price spike certain suppliers had pursued a profit-maximizing strategy, intentionally withholding gasoline supplies or delaying shipping as a tactic to drive up prices. Such collusion would be easier today, with the top 10 refiners now controlling 78 percent of the supply. That is a 22 percent increase over a decade ago.

Today, 48 of my Democratic colleagues joined me in sending a letter to the FTC asking that it begin a thorough investigation into whether or not gas companies are colluding to artificially increase prices.

We cannot let the Bush administration's cozy relationship with big oil companies hold Americans hostage at the pump. If Congressional Republicans were really interested in doing something today, they would call on the Bush administration to launch an investigation to determine whether oil companies are purposefully inflating prices at the pump.

UNITED STATES REFINERY REVITALIZATION ACT OF 2004

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 671, I call up the bill (H.R. 4517) to provide incentives to increase refinery capacity in the United States, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of H.R. 4517 is as follows:

H.R. 4517

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "United States Refinery Revitalization Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following: